

By GUS BILIRAKIS

There is no symbol that better represents our country's history and tradition than the American flag. Our flag is prominently displayed in classrooms, courtrooms, above our nation's capital, and even on the moon. It serves as a constant reminder of what makes America great.

Since George Washington asked Betsy Ross to make the flag in 1776, it has been an icon signifying the freedom and prosperity of our nation. It flew over Fort McHenry during the War of 1812, inspiring Francis Scott Key to write the Star Spangled Banner. Since the Revolutionary War, America's finest have fought and died for what the flag stands for, carrying it into every American conflict. In the Civil War, William Driver smuggled his locally famous American flag, "Old Glory," out of the Confederate controlled city of Nashville by sewing it to the inside of his comforter. He returned once the Union retook the city to raise the flag atop the statehouse. It is from this story that we get one of the many names for our flag, "Old Glory."

Our flag has also helped us heal as a nation in times of great sadness. After September 11th, our flag acted as a symbol of unity, a symbol of pride, and a symbol of respect for those who have fallen. Our flag has been draped across America's heroes and has been with us through our worst tragedies and greatest triumphs.

Every morning, children across the United States pledge allegiance to our flag. They renew their commitment to something greater than themselves. Old Glory represents a way of life and a set of ideals to hold our government and ourselves to. It is symbolic of freedom, justice, and democracy, and represents the precepts on which our country was founded.

Our flag has been inspiring Americans and people all over the world for more than 200 years. On this Flag Day we should honor all that our flag represents, and remember to take pride in the country for which it stands.